



Democrats Fight for Effective Gun Safety Legislation

At the end of the last school year, members of Congress pledged immediate action to address school and gun safety. Democrats responded and fought to pass a number of effective, common-sense gun safety provisions in the Senate version of the juvenile justice legislation, **S. 254**, the *Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Accountability and Rehabilitation Act*. Republicans have ignored the need for gun safety in our communities and schools. Instead, they have pushed for legislation that would weaken existing gun control laws and blocked a number of Democratic proposals to enhance gun safety.

Republicans continue to prevent the consideration of effective gun safety measures, and have recently stated that the conference committee for juvenile justice legislation is unlikely to meet before adjournment. Each day that the Republicans delay consideration of effective gun safety legislation, an average of almost 12 children are killed by gunfire. Democrats understand the importance of effective gun safety legislation, and will continue to work to pass initiatives that take guns out of the hands of criminals and children.

Close the gun show loophole. The *Brady Bill* background check requirements do not apply to the thousands of guns sold by unlicensed gun dealers at gun shows. A Democratic amendment to **S. 254** would close the gun show loophole by requiring dealers at gun shows to play by the same rules as other gun dealers.

Although 90 percent of Americans favor background checks on individuals purchasing guns at gun shows, Republicans went to work for the gun lobby to *expand* this loophole and supported legislation that would have:

- weakened law enforcement's ability to conduct a background check on gun purchases at gun shows by dramatically shortening the amount of time in which to complete the check from three business days to 24 hours;
- defined gun shows so narrowly that the definition would not cover many events at which hundreds of guns are sold;
- ensured that gun shows remain a safe harbor for criminals who want to illegally traffic in firearms; and

- undermined State firearms laws by allowing Federally-licensed firearms dealers to sell guns in all 50 States and to ship guns to unlicensed buyers across State lines.

Keep guns out of the hands of serious juvenile offenders. Democrats support passage of legislation to keep guns out of the hands of individuals who have committed serious violent crimes as juveniles. Under current law, persons who commit serious violent criminal offenses as juveniles are not prohibited from purchasing guns once they reach the age of 18. Democrats were successful in passing an amendment to **S. 254** to ban gun sales to juveniles with violent crime records.

Expand the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative. In 1996, President Clinton launched the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative (YCGII) in 17 cities to trace guns used in crimes, and identify and arrest adults who sell guns to children. With the support of Congressional Democrats, the YCGII has been expanded over the last two years to 37 cities. Since 1997, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has conducted more than 200,000 crime-gun traces under the program for local law enforcement agencies. Democrats were able to include a provision in **S. 254** that would expand the program to 75 cities by 2000, 150 cities by 2002, and 250 cities by 2003.

Increase penalties on straw purchases. “Straw purchasers” buy firearms and transfer them to individuals who cannot purchase them legally, including juveniles, felons, fugitives and stalkers. Senate Democrats successfully sought passage of an amendment to **S. 254** that would increase penalties on straw purchases.

Ban juvenile possession of assault weapons. Senate Democrats were successful in winning passage of a provision to ban juvenile possession of semi-automatic assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips.

Prohibit the importation of high-capacity ammunition clips. The *1994 Crime Act* included a ban on assault weapons and magazines with a capacity of more than 10 rounds. The *1994 Crime Act* also contained a provision, however, that allowed importation and possession of existing large-capacity ammunition clips. Since then, there has been a surge in imported large-capacity clips. The Senate passed a Democratic amendment to **S. 254** to close this loophole.

Ensure gun safety. Safety locks and gun lock boxes can prevent crimes and accidental shootings. Democrats believe that every handgun sold in the United States by a licensed gun dealer should be sold with a safety device. Senate Democrats passed an amendment to **S. 254** to prohibit the sale or transfer of a handgun by a licensed dealer without a secure gun storage or safety device.